

<b>Institution:</b> Newman University Birmingham
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 31 Theology and Religious Studies
<p><b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p><b>Institutional Context</b></p> <p>As outlined in the accompanying Institutional environment statement, Newman is a modestly-sized but diverse University situated on a single campus in south-west Birmingham, with approximately 2,800 students taking a range of subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The Theology UoA works within and contributes to the wider research culture of this academic community. Founded as a Catholic teacher training college in 1968, Newman significantly developed its portfolio throughout the 1990s and 2000s, attaining full University status in 2013. The University's research degrees are currently validated by Liverpool Hope University, but during the next REF period Newman will be seeking its own Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP). This is central to our key strategic aim of becoming "recognised nationally and internationally for the integrity and quality of our research and scholarship".</p> <p>The Institution's strategic plan is underpinned by its Catholic ethos and core values of seeking to make a positive difference to individuals and communities through the contribution to society of its staff, students and graduates. Our vision for research, then, is to foster a commitment to the advancement of research "dedicated to the construction of the common good, the transformation of its members' lives and of the world they serve and engage with". Partnership and collaborative research with public and professional bodies and third-sector organisations is, therefore, strongly encouraged, focusing on a range of critical and contemporary issues, particularly education and well-being, heritage and culture, and community cohesion. The Institution expects all academic staff to engage in advanced scholarship and research, including knowledge creation, integration, sharing and application. These endeavours may result in formal publications and/or find expression in other forms of dissemination, such as knowledge exchange and public engagement.</p> <p>The University's Research Committee takes a strategic role in developing and sustaining this research culture. It works to ensure that the areas of research strength within the Institution are protected and enhanced, that early career academics and other colleagues with research potential are nurtured, and that resources are targeted to build an externally-recognised research presence. The implementation of this strategy is supported by the Research Office and Graduate School. Their duties include: the maintenance of a University-wide repository and research data base; the preparation and provision for the Research Committee of up-to-date information on research performance in the University; coordination of all matters relating to postgraduate research students; oversight of the establishment and operation of the University's research centres; organisation of regular seminar programmes; coordination of the University's links with relevant research networks; and administration of the University's forthcoming submission for Research Degree Awarding Powers. The Institutional research plan for the next five-year period (2021-2025) will focus on delivering on three specific priorities: attaining Research Degree Awarding Powers; ensuring compliance with research integrity and Open Access requirements; and promoting disciplinary, cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary research.</p> <p><b>Cross-Institutional Research Linked to Theology</b></p> <p>For several years in the middle of this REF period, the University as a whole was engaged in interdisciplinary research into the public perception of the relationship between religion and science. As detailed in the Institutional Environment Statement, the Centre for Science, Knowledge and Belief in Society (CSKBS) was a multidisciplinary Research Centre located at Newman from early 2015 to summer 2018. The Centre's activities spanned a diverse range of disciplines including TRS, social sciences and social psychology, and aimed to investigate the public understanding of the place in society of both religion and science. Its research focused predominantly on evaluating the perception of religion and the life sciences among religious groups and within the general population of diverse societies (specifically the UK and Canada). The work of the Centre fell within scope of the Theology and Religious Studies UoA, and its core</p>

members, including Prof Fern Elsdon-Baker, Dr Alex Hall, and Dr Stephen Jones largely relocated to the University of Birmingham's Department of Theology and Religion in 2018, where their impactful research continues.

### **UoA Context**

The Theology and Philosophy subject area sits within the Department of Arts and Humanities, one of two Departments in the Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Professional Studies (FASSPS). The UoA has evolved from submitting just one colleague to RAE 2008, 1 full submission plus 1 ECR in 2014, to the current position where all staff members (3.6) are being returned. This is partly a result of the success of the strategy outlined in the UoA Environment Statement in 2014, viz:

- To require all newly appointed staff to hold a PhD and to be able to demonstrate at interview a clear research plan for the next 3-5 years
- To provide a greater level of support and facilitation for existing staff to complete Doctorates
- To appoint experienced Visiting Research Fellows to help to develop a stronger research culture within the subject area
- To provide mentoring for new appointees

This level of development also flows from the University's overall Strategic Plan for Research produced following the last REF cycle, which included a clear commitment to invest directly in growing "a critical mass of academic staff who are engaged in research, practice, or other forms of advanced scholarship and demonstrate achievements that are recognised by the wider academic community to be of national or international standing."

The research activity of the UoA staff team spans various key areas of Christian theology and the Philosophy of Religion. Colleagues are encouraged to pursue their own areas of interest, but share an over-arching goal of making links between academic research and the issues facing contemporary society (see further, section 4 below). Broadly, staff expertise lies within the areas of:

- biblical interpretation, both ancient and modern (Docherty and Goode)
- philosophy, ethics and the relationship between science and religion (Hickman)
- late antiquity and the theo-political influences on the formation of the modern discipline of Patristic Studies (Hunt)

### **UoA Development and Research Strategy 2020-2025**

Between 2014 and 2020 the UoA succeeded in its core aim of enabling all members of the Theology and Philosophy subject area to enter the REF exercise. The number of published outputs produced by the staff team has also increased significantly, from 6 in the last census period to 20 between 2014 and 2020. Staff also engaged more actively in national and international scholarly networks (see further information in section 4 below) and presented conference papers annually. Our plans for the next REF cycle build on these achievements, as we aim:

- To sustain the volume of printed outputs
- To develop the quality of printed outputs
- To increase the number of applications made to external funding bodies
- To foster greater collaboration with external organisations

Further specific aims relating to research impact are detailed below.

### **Impact Strategy**

The UoA members acknowledge that our level of impact is not commensurate with the quality of our research and publications, partly as a consequence of the particular history and small size of the University. Accordingly, the Impact Case Studies we submitted to REF 2014 were underdeveloped and also overlapped to a certain extent. Efforts were made during this REF Cycle to enhance this area of our work, in collaboration with our colleagues across the Institution as a whole. Centrally funded training sessions on creating impactful research were therefore offered between 2016 and 2018, and an Impact Working Group was formed in 2018 to foster the sharing of good practice between UoAs. The work of the CSKBS (see above section 1) further strengthened the engagement with the public of the members of the UoA staff team. The

Humanities Research Centre (see further section 3 below) has organised public events to facilitate the dissemination of research, and it is expected that this Centre will continue to serve as an important vehicle for enhancing research impact into the next REF cycle.

These initiatives have resulted in the production of two stronger and more diverse Impact Case Studies for this REF submission than in 2014, but scope for considerable development remains. Our key impact-related aims for the next phase of the UoA's development are, accordingly:

- To embed impact into every research project from its very genesis
- To equip staff with effective tools and skills for measuring and evaluating research impact

These aims are supported by the overarching research impact goals of the Department of Arts and Humanities, within which we sit, as agreed in 2019:

- To build internal and external collaborations through clusters of expertise, especially by cultivating interdisciplinary relationships through the work of the Humanities Research Centre
- To continue to develop public-facing partnerships that help to shape projects and their outputs
- To manage pathways to impact more effectively, particularly through the use of institutional methods of gathering data and sharing best practice

## 2. People

### Staffing

The Theology and Philosophy subject area consists of three full time staff (Docherty, Hickman and Hunt), one part time colleague (Goode, 0.6), plus a further team member (Elliott) who works mainly within Initial Teacher Education and is, therefore, not included within this UoA. These academics have been employed throughout the entirety of this REF cycle; one other colleague retired in 2018 and has not been replaced. Docherty was promoted from Reader to Professor in 2016, and Hickman from Senior Lecturer to Reader in 2020. Goode and Hunt are both Senior Lecturers. The research and teaching expertise of the staff team lies in the broad areas of biblical studies (Docherty and Goode), patristics and late antiquity (Hunt), and philosophy of religion and ethics (Hickman). A particular focus of all colleagues' work is the applicability of theology and philosophy to modern day issues, including the environment (Goode), poverty (Hickman) and education (Docherty).

Research time is allocated under the University's Workload Allocation Model and should not normally be less than 200 hours per year. Additional research time (up to a further 300 hours per annum) is awarded to readers and professors. All University employees participate in the Institution's appraisal scheme and there is also a formal system in place for mentoring new appointees. Space and time for writing is made available during each academic year to all staff through centrally-organised off-site 'writing retreat' days. An annual celebration of staff research run by the Humanities Research Centre (see further section 4 below) offers a further welcome opportunity to share successes and to foster collaboration between researchers across disciplines.

### Research Students

The Institution's PGR community has grown significantly since the end of the last REF cycle as part of the overarching Research Strategy, so that it now numbers just over 40 students in total across all subject areas. Several initiatives have contributed to this expansion, including the provision of fee-waivers and bursaries for exceptional candidates, and a system of fees discounts for alumni. The introduction of a new MRes Humanities programme in 2015 has also provided a clear route into advanced postgraduate work for the University's own graduates. Thus, at the time of the last REF census, the UoA could report one completed PhD (supervised by Docherty) and no current PGR students, but during this REF cycle a further two students have successfully achieved Doctorates (supervised by Docherty), and there are four ongoing PGR students (2 x Docherty; 1 x Docherty and Goode; 1 x Docherty, Hickman and Hunt). In addition one MRes

student has completed (Docherty and Goode) during this cycle, and a further two (1 x Hickman; 1 x Hunt) are in progress. The subject area also offers a long-established taught MA programme in Contemporary Christian Theology (co-ordinated by Hickman).

Institutional commitment to formation and human flourishing extends to the community of our research students, so our approach to supervision is characterised by individual support, a sense of partnership, and strong supervisory teams (usually composed of 3 members) to provide a breadth of expertise and to safeguard continuity in the case of staff changes. PGR students are encouraged to develop positive relationships with one another, through such vehicles as the NewArts postgraduate network, established in 2017 to bring together postgraduate students from across disciplines, which is student-led and organises both academic and social gatherings. During the covid pandemic in 2020, for example, when physical access to the University was limited, the group set up fortnightly zoom chats to enable all postgraduates to 'meet' informally, sharing experiences and providing guidance about appropriate support services on offer. PGR students are also given regular opportunities to contribute to the research culture within the Humanities Department, and are invited as a matter of course to all the events run by the Humanities Research Centre (see further below section 3). A PGR representative sits as a full member of the Centre's steering group, to ensure that students have a voice in shaping its activities and direction.

The Graduate School has the primary responsibility within the Institution for the training and career development of these postgraduate research students, and for their social and intellectual integration into the University and the wider academic community. Subject areas and Faculties also contribute to this endeavour, primarily through the provision of central services such as the Careers Office, and through the inclusion of PGR students in research seminars and other relevant events. A full programme of training is offered annually to all PGR students, including both face-to-face and online options, to facilitate the participation of the large component of part-time Doctoral students. A named member of the Graduate School staff co-ordinates and develops this programme, in conjunction with supervisors, who provide some of the regular workshops. All students are also inducted into the Vitae Researcher Developer Framework, and are encouraged to use this tool in regularly reflecting on their skills and career goals. The University offers further specific training and opportunities to gain teaching experience to those PGR students preparing to work in Higher Education. The PGR Students Co-coordinator provides pastoral support and mentoring in addition to that offered within the supervisory team, monitors student progress, and deals with any supervision-related issues. She also runs the PGR Staff-Student Consultative Committee, an official forum which meets at least twice a year.

All research students have access to a dedicated PGR room for on-campus study and socialising, which helps to foster community cohesion and build relationships across disciplines. Printing and photocopying facilities are available free of charge to all research students, and they have an annual allowance of up to 20 free inter-library loans. Each student is eligible to apply for financial support of up to £150p.a. for research activities, including conference attendance, travel to libraries/archives, books and equipment. In addition, through our formal partnership with Liverpool Hope University, Newman research students have access to their facilities, both virtual and physical. Institutional membership of CREST also provides further opportunities for collaboration and networking with a wider PGR community, and for bidding for funding to support training and conference attendance. PGR students in Theology can attend research seminars offered by the TRS Department at the University of Birmingham, and are guided by their supervisors towards membership of appropriate subject associations (e.g. British New Testament Society, Society of Biblical Literature) and encouraged to offer papers at international conferences.

### **Equality and Diversity**

Fundamental to the Institution's Strategic Plan is its commitment to the formation of staff and students. Its values are clearly expressed in the People Strategy 2015-20, which states that: "The University is committed to advancing equality of opportunity and eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to foster good relations between people from different groups which embraces and celebrates diversity in line with our values and principles."

These principles are enacted in, for example, the requirement for all members of academic staff to complete mandatory Equality and Diversity training every four years, and the work of the University's Equality and Diversity Committee. An LGBT Group was established in 2018, and an Athena Swan working group in 2019. Achieving a gender balance among speakers is an important consideration when arranging conferences and seminar series.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### Research Infrastructure

Oversight of research within the Institution is located in the Graduate School and its research office, housing a small dedicated team of academic and support staff. This office organises and administers the University's central Research Committee, Research Degrees Committee and Research Ethics Sub-committee. With representation from researchers drawn from across the two Faculties and all the UoAs, these committees provide the infrastructure for the disbursement and delegation of funds; the development of the Institutional research strategy; oversight of the PGR environment, students and related activities; and the co-ordination and monitoring of relevant policies, including open access and research ethics and integrity.

Following the completion of the previous REF cycle, the University's research infrastructure was enhanced between 2014 and 2018 by investment in a part time bid writer/advisor. The post-holder facilitated the wide circulation of up-to-date information on grants and external funding opportunities and organised a programme of research training workshops for staff. His main role was to offer direct guidance to individuals/teams in preparing bid applications, including advice on costing and pricing, meeting funding eligibility criteria, and submission of bids. Since 2018, this work has been outsourced, but similar support remains available on a consultancy basis. The Institution's central Finance Department also has a well-established system for ensuring the full-economic costing, review and quality control, authorisation, and submission of bids. At various points during this REF period, the University has also subscribed to Research Professional, Grantfinder and other tools to support funding acquisition. Academic staff established an internal Impact Case Study Working Group in 2019, as described above in section 1, in order to support the development of this particular aspect of our research work.

#### Internal Research Funding

The University's Research Committee has operated a number of seedcorn funding and other financial support initiatives during this REF cycle which are open to all members of academic staff on a competitive basis. These include a small grants scheme, as well as funds to support the staging of conferences, inaugural professorial lectures and the invitation of external speakers to contribute to the regular research seminar series. To help these funds go further, the University Facilities Team waives all charges for rooms, equipment and administration for conferences and other approved research events.

One of the principal means through which the University invests in research development and activity is through the sabbatical leave scheme, administered by the Research Committee. Under its terms, all permanent members of the academic staff are eligible to apply after a minimum of three years of continuous service. Funds of up to £5000 are available to free up an individual from all commitments such as teaching and administration for a period of six to ten weeks in order to facilitate a higher level of research productivity. Specific targets for the sabbatical period are negotiated with line managers, which must relate to the next REF submission, and are measured through the completion of a final report, evaluated by the Research Committee. Three members of the UoA (Docherty, Hickman and Hunt) have benefitted from this scheme during the current REF cycle.

A significant proportion of the QR funding received by the University during this period has been devolved down to individual Units of Assessment for allocation and management. Spending is ultimately signed off by the Chair of the Research Committee, but this system enables each UoA to exercise a level of autonomy and responsibility in setting their own financial and research

priorities. The amount available to this UoA has been between £2000 and £7000 p.a. This funding is shared between the individual UoA members, and can be spent on books or other necessary equipment, research trips to specialist libraries, teaching relief, and the costs of attending national and international conferences to present papers. The use of all these funds must be explicitly tied to an activity or output that will contribute to the UOA's REF 2021 submission.

### External Research Funding

During this REF cycle, Docherty gained funding of Euros 5,400 (March 2019) from the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft or DFG) as part of a collaborative bid with a colleague in the Department of New Testament Studies at TU-Dortmund University. This enabled the organisation of an international conference on the theme of "The Bible and Migration". Selected papers presented there will be published in:

Kowalski, B. and Docherty, Susan E. (eds.), *Let My People Go: The Reception of Exodus Motifs in Jewish and Christian Literature*. Themes in Biblical Narrative Series; forthcoming 2021, Leiden: Brill.

Hunt was awarded a Small Research Grant from the British Academy in the 2015-2016 round of applications of £3,640 for a project exploring "H.-I. Marrou and the impact of the Algerian War (1954-1962) on the study of Late Antiquity." This has resulted in publications in *Studia Patristica* and the *International Journal of Francophone Studies*.

### Research Centres

#### *The Newman Centre for the Bible and its Reception*

The Newman Research Centre for the Bible and its Reception (henceforward NRCBR) was established in 2009 as a focus for the University's traditional research and teaching strengths in biblical studies. It engages with the academic study of the Jewish and Christian Bible, its later reception (in art, music, literature and culture), and its relevance to contemporary society. The multi-cultural nature of the West Midlands region and the extent of shared content between the sacred texts of three of the world's major religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) enable the Centre to draw on the interpretation and reception of scriptural texts across all three faith traditions.

The NRCBR offers an annual programme of seminars and study days, which are either free to the public or charged at cost, and which have attracted between 8 and 80 attendees. Speakers are drawn from within and beyond the University, including overseas-based scholars, and the events aim to bridge the gap between academic biblical studies and the lay members of Christian churches and other faith groups. Their emphasis is, therefore, largely on the ongoing relevance of the study of the bible for contemporary issues. The summer study day in 2015, for example, was entitled "Dead Letters and Living Words: Continuity and Creativity in the Use of the Bible" and included sessions on political and activist readings of the New Testament, and on the artist as biblical interpreter. Since 2014, the NRCBR has held an Introduction to New Testament Greek summer school which has been designed for Newman students, those from other Universities, and the wider public. Attendance has averaged between 10 and 20 attendees, with approximately half being Newman students and the other half drawn from outside the University. This five day 'First Steps into the World of New Testament Greek' is an innovative course that uses the acquisition of basic *Koine Greek* reading skills to learn about wider aspects of the language, including: working with manuscripts; the transmission of the scriptural text and the development of critical editions of the New Testament; the work of the scribe; and an introduction to translation theory and exposure to some of the main challenges posed in translating an ancient text.

An important platform for the work of the NRCBR has been its website, 'Newman Research Centre for the Bible and its Reception' at <https://bibleresearchtoday.com>. This is an outward facing resource that aims to disseminate research to a more popular audience as well as providing news of current events at Newman and the work of staff members. The website averages well in excess of 4,000 hits per week and, as of February 2021, has logged a total of 87,000 views. It currently has 722 active followers, and it has a reach across every continent. Topics for the posts range from, 'The death of the Apostle Paul' (with over 24,400 views), 'Which book of the Apocrypha did Paul use Most?' (5,638 views), to 'Why are there no cats in the Bible?' (over 10,400 views). A number of posts serve the dual purpose of sharing scholarly debate and opinion with a wider audience as well as supporting modules being taught within the University. In addition to posts,

the website offers a number of 'pages' that act as resources for website visitors and students. These include annotated links to open access journals relating to biblical studies, free online biblical studies tools (for example, STEP Bible), and open access academic sites (such as digital manuscript collections).

The major focus of the NRCBR during 2019 and 2020 was involvement with a national initiative to promote knowledge and understanding of the bible among lay Catholics in the UK, run and funded jointly by the Bible Society and the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales: the 'Year of the Word: The God who Speaks' campaign (<https://www.godwhospeaks.uk/>). Both Docherty and Goode serve on the project organising committee for the RC Archdiocese of Birmingham, helping to organise public events and creating resources for use in Catholic schools and parishes. The NRCBR hosted the official launch of the campaign in the West Midlands in January 2020, with a free public event on "The God Who Speaks: The Bible in Today's World", featuring a range of talks, including one from Goode on the use of biblical themes and images for political purposes on social media platforms. The Centre website was used effectively for a 'plant a biblical garden' project to support this 'God Who Speaks' initiative organised jointly with the Archdiocese. Two parallel series of related short items were made available, one aimed at children and one at adults. Although COVID restrictions resulted in a scaling back of the project, a series of short videos was also added to this resource. A related resource was the creation of 30 articles that featured examples of flora and fauna mentioned in the Bible that can also be found in the UK. Each article (approximately 2,500 words) discusses the reference and, where applicable, its use, within biblical and post-biblical (Jewish, Christian, and Islamic) traditions. These were published to coincide with 'The Wildlife Trusts' '30 Days Wild' project (2019 and 2020). This provides the context for Goode's submission to the REF.

The NRCBR thus provides a focus for the research and dissemination activities of Docherty and Goode in particular, but also draws in Hunt's work on patristic interpretation of scripture and the ethics and practices of reading. It has provided an important means of involving Visiting Research Fellows and Visiting Professors in the UoA, strengthening our research culture and public profile. During the census period, four colleagues have been associated with the Centre in that capacity, supporting it through, for example, public lectures and input at study days, engagement with PGR students, and advising on research bids and impact strategy: Prof Steve Moyise (Emeritus, University of Chichester); Prof Martin O'Kane (Emeritus, University of Wales Trinity St David); Dr Lloyd Pietersen (Bristol Baptist College); and Dr Jenny Read-Heimerdinger (Emerita, University of Wales Trinity St David). Prof O'Kane and Dr Read-Heimerdinger will continue in their roles into the next REF cycle. The unit's work with teachers has also been supported through the appointment of two Visiting Professors who work across the disciplines of Christian Theology and Education: Prof Stephen McKinney (University of Glasgow, 2017-present) and Prof John Sullivan (Emeritus, Liverpool Hope University, 2013-2019).

#### *The Humanities Research Centre*

The Humanities Research Centre (henceforward HRC) was founded in 2015 in order to promote research excellence and foster relationships between academics and PGR students working in all Humanities subject areas within the University. It runs a programme of regular seminars each semester, providing a forum for both external and internal colleagues to present their research. A total of 67 speakers have contributed to this series, including scholars based at the Universities of Bristol, Durham, Hull, Leeds, Łódź, Nottingham, Toronto and Warwick. The HRC has also established an annual public lecture, inviting as speakers well-known poets, playwrights and fiction writers, especially those with a particular connection to the West Midlands region, including Liz Berry, Edward Bond and Caroline Lawrence. These lectures are designed to showcase the Institution's work in the Humanities, and also serve to develop relationships with schools and other sections of the local community.

#### *The Centre for Science, Knowledge and Belief in Society*

This multidisciplinary and externally funded Research Centre was located at Newman from early 2015 to summer 2018, as detailed above in section 1; see further reference in the Institutional Environment Statement and in one of the accompanying Impact Case Studies.

**Special Collections**

The University Library houses the John Henry Newman Collection. This consists of approximately 500 books and pamphlets, including some of Newman's own writings, such as letters, diaries, essays and sermons. It also contains works by other members of the Oxford Movement and later secondary sources covering aspects of Christian theology and church history, especially the Patristic period and the 19th century. Further resources connected with Newman, after whom the Institution is named, can be accessed by staff, students and associated researchers free of charge at a museum dedicated to him within the nearby Birmingham Oratory, which he founded.

**Esteem Indicators**

Docherty was awarded the William Barclay Distinguished Research Fellowship in Biblical Studies at the University of Glasgow in 2016 and the Mary Ward Visiting Research Fellowship at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology (MBIT) in Cambridge in 2020. These awards (of £5000 and £3000 respectively) covered the costs of travel and accommodation and partial teaching relief to enable her to spend a period of three months in each Institution contributing to its research culture and pursuing her own work. Following the conclusion of her time at MBIT she was invited to continue as an Honorary Research Fellow. In 2018 she was elected as an Associate Member of the Irish Institute for Catholic Studies in Limerick, Ireland. In 2015 she was approached by the editorial board of the highly-regarded *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* to jointly guest-edit a special edition devoted to her major area of research specialism, the interpretation of the 'Old Testament' in the New Testament (*JNTS* 38/1). She has given two public lectures (2013 and 2018) at the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands.

Hickman was appointed as the respondent to the Annual Boyle Lecture in London in 2015 and gave invited public lectures at the Faraday Institute Cambridge in 2018 and Dublin City University in 2019. She was also an invited participant in a conference concluding an AHRC-funded project based at the University of Cambridge on 'The Cambridge Platonists and the Origins of Enlightenment' in 2019.

**4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society****Collaborative Values**

The University is a member of the GuildHE Research Consortium, previously the Consortium of Research Excellence, Support, and Training (CREST), and thus operates within a formal network of over two dozen small and specialist institutions. These liaise closely on research policy and practice, and collaborate in the provision of postgraduate resources, in offering an annual summer school to PGR students and supervisors, and in maintaining a shared research repository. Newman also belongs to the Cathedrals Group association of 15 universities. In terms of local economic impact, the UCU commissioned report by Hatch Regeneris in July 2020 estimated the University's Gross Value Added to Birmingham as £30 million (<https://ucu.org.uk/article/10922/New-study-demonstrates-huge-local-economic-impact-of-universities#citydata>).

As detailed above in section 1, the overarching vision for research within Newman University, in line with its core values, includes a commitment to advancing the common good and transforming peoples' lives. Outreach, partnership and the application of knowledge to the needs of society are, therefore, strongly encouraged, and the members of the Theology UoA all collaborate with other academics and organisations in order to contribute to scholarship and wider society. This aspect of our work has become more significant and consistent since the last REF census, and some key strands within it are summarised below.

**Contribution to Schools and Teachers**

The University was originally founded as a teacher training college in 1968, and it maintains a vibrant portfolio of teacher education programmes, and a strong tradition of engagement with the state education sector more widely. Partnerships, both formal and informal, with schools across



the West Midlands region are numerous and well-established, and relationships with alumni who have pursued a career in teaching are fostered. Several members of the UoA staff team contribute directly to ITE courses, and all are involved with outreach work to pupils and teachers of Religious Education, at all levels, but especially at Key Stages 4 and 5. Normally, at least two “Learning Days” per year are organised, when 6<sup>th</sup> Form RS pupils and their teachers are invited in for workshops and masterclasses on A Level topics. During the covid pandemic in 2020, when it was impossible to host face-to-face events, the UoA team organised a series of weekly zoom webinars during June, on topics including religious language, the problem of evil, and environmental theology. These attracted sizeable audiences (between 35 and 95 each week) from across the entire country, and generated really positive feedback on social media and among RS teacher support networks. The initiative was specifically commended by the representative of NATRE (the National Association of RE teachers) at the AGM (4/12/20) of TRS-UK.

This engagement developed in a particular new direction during the wide-ranging Government-mandated national review of GCSE and A Level curricula in 2015-2017, which led to significant changes in the content and format of these examinations in every subject. Religious Studies was included in these reform plans, which had a significant bearing on Catholic secondary schools in England and Wales, since these are all required by the Catholic Education Service (CES) to devote 10% of curriculum time to Religious Education and usually enter every pupil for GCSE RS. The CES, therefore, formed a small national advisory body in 2016 to provide input to this Government review and to make recommendations to the Bishops Conference. Docherty was appointed a member of this group, known as Credo, attending regular meetings with the CES, and contributing to its written submissions to the Department of Education. Once the reform programme was completed, the Credo group turned its attention to two further ongoing tasks: first, working with the examination boards to produce new syllabi in Catholic RE, and then the resourcing and training of RE teachers in Catholic secondary schools throughout England and Wales to deliver them. This provides the context for Docherty’s Impact Case Study. Docherty served on the committee which organised a series of national training days in four regions of the UK every summer from 2017-2019. Newman University hosted one of these events every year, with members of the UoA offering sessions to equip serving teachers to engage with various areas of the new RS syllabi. The average attendance at each day was 70, with many schools sending one representative, who would then disseminate their learning more widely in their own school. The attendees were drawn largely, although not exclusively from the Catholic Dioceses of Birmingham, Clifton, Menevia, Nottingham and Plymouth.

### **Contribution to the Catholic Church in England and Wales**

The original founding mission of the University to train teachers has evolved into a wider role of service to the Catholic Church in England and Wales. This is made manifest in various ways. The Theology and Philosophy subject area is, for example, the regional hub for the provision across the Midlands and the Southwest of England and the whole of Wales for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS), an introductory course in theology recommended for those appointed as teachers in all Catholic schools in the UK. As outlined above in section 3, the Newman Centre for the Bible and its Reception is pivotally engaged in the Bishops’ current ‘Year of the Word’ campaign aimed at developing the understanding of the bible among lay Catholics and Docherty and Goode have produced resources to support this initiative. Goode takes the lead on the ongoing efforts to forge connections with Catholic parishes in the Birmingham Archdiocese, and with members of other Christian churches in the West Midlands. Docherty was appointed in 2018 as Scriptural and Theological Consultant to the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, advising especially on the content and delivery of Religious Education curricula in Catholic schools (as further detailed in the preceding paragraph), and contributing to the publication of a revised National RE Curriculum Directory in 2020. Hickman was Theological Advisor to a project on ‘Visions for Educational Leadership’, which was funded by the Catholic Education Service and ran from 2013-15, based at Heythrop College in the University of London. A long-standing member of the subject area who retired in 2018 also served for over a decade as Theological Advisor to the major English Catholic charity the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and to the Catholic Worker Movement.

**Contribution to Society**

Hickman's work on ethics has clear application to contemporary societal issues and has involved her in several projects. Since 2019 she has been both a Trustee of the Trussell Trust and an advisory board member for a Templeton funded project, 'God and the Book of Nature: Building a Science-Engaged Theology of Nature', based at the University of Edinburgh.

**Contribution to the Academy**

All members of the UoA are active members of relevant scholarly associations and present regularly at national and international conferences. Docherty is Chair (2012-present) of the Annual (Hawarden) Seminar on the Use of the OT in the NT and Co-Chair (2013-present) of the New Testament and Second Temple Judaism seminar of the British New Testament Society (BNTS), taking responsibility for organising the programme and selecting themes and papers for the annual meetings. She has also served (2012-2017) on the steering group of the Hebrews Section of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), and is currently on the Executive Committee of the BNTS and TRS-UK. Hunt sat on the Board of the Ecclesiastical History Society from 2016-2019 and was co-convenor for the Seminar on Bible, Critical Theory and Reception 2015-2019. He also organised panels at the conferences of (2015) the Oxford Patristics Society (2015) and the North American Patristics Society (NAPS, 2016). Hickman is actively engaged in the UK Science and Religion Forum, serving on the Committee from 2008-2018 with particular responsibility for Graduate Student membership. She served as Editor of *Reviews in Science and Religion* from 2011-2018, and is a Fellow of the International Society for Science and Religion.

The significance of the work published by members of the UoA is evident also in an increasing number of invitations to speak at other Universities nationally and internationally. During this REF cycle, Docherty has spoken at research seminars at the Universities of Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Gloucestershire, Nottingham, Maynooth (Ireland), Oxford, while Hickman has presented at research seminars at the Universities of Cambridge and Edinburgh and at UCL. Hunt was invited to speak at a major conference on decolonising the study of the ancient world at the University of Aarhus (Denmark). Goode had a paper accepted for a plenary session of the British New Testament Society's Annual Conference in 2019.

Other contributions to the academic community in the UK and further afield include acting as external examiner for PhD theses. Docherty has undertaken 8 such examinations since the last REF census, including 2 in Europe, and Hickman 2, one at Exeter University and the other at McGill University Canada. UoA members have published book reviews in leading journals such as *DSS*, *ExpT*, *ITQ*, *JSJ*, *JSNT*, *JST* and *RBL*. Docherty is also a reviewer for new book proposals for several publishers, including Baylor Academic, CUP and SPCK, and for grant applications to the Carnegie Trust and the European Science Fund (Humanities Division). She has been a member of the Peer Review College for the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships since 2018.